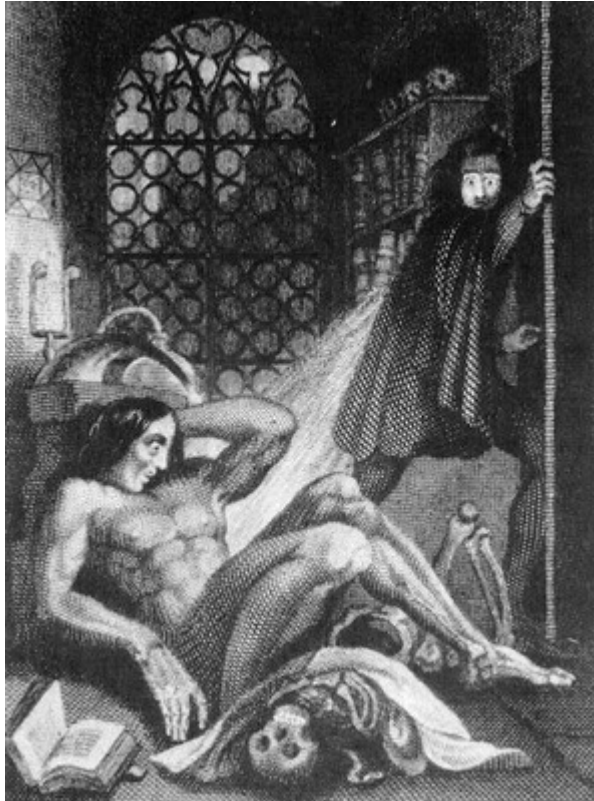


# DIGITAL IMAGING AND PHOTOGRAPHY

SUNDAY, 4 APRIL 2010

Avatars, Frankenstein, Computer Games, Science Fiction and Otherness



Before we start back on our digital cultures unit and the discussion of "The Body and New Media", I thought that it was worthwhile adding to my comments in the number of my entries over the last month or so that explored Romanticism and the sublime. I also began to examine some of the general themes of cyberculture and cybernetics. I began to ponder the continuing power exerted over our collective imaginations of one of the great creations of horror fiction. Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) claimed to be the first science fiction novel, infuses elements of the Gothic novel and the Romantic Movement. It is seen as a critique of enlightenment ideas and a warning against the technological advancements promised by the industrial revolution and science. The tale can also be seen as a critique of the French Revolution and horrors of the Terror that it unleashed.

Today the name Frankenstein has become synonymous with anxieties over science 'going too far'. We see this in collective responses to GM crops and what we refer to as 'Frankenstein foods'. Genetic engineering also conjures up images of the 'mad doctor'. Science then, instead of benefiting humankind, is seen to be threatening its very existence. *Frankenstein* also encodes other fears and anxieties. In what way is Frankenstein's creature monstrous? Does the creature embody our fears of difference/the other? For example, what anxieties are being expressed in James Whale's 1931 adaptation? Are we meant to feel sympathy for the creature? Different contexts may generate different meanings. What kind of fears is expressed with films and comic books like the X-Men? Ian McKellen speaks very eloquently about his role in the film (no video posting I am afraid). The *Cyborg Handbook* discusses the character of Wolverine and other popular cultural examples alongside science fact.

As well as looking at the many contemporary manifestations of Dr Frankenstein and his terrible Creature: from computer games to film, animation and cybernetics, we may note that the novel also alludes to other earlier myths: creation stories, the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, the Jewish myth of the Golem and classical mythology (as suggested by Shelley's subtitle: *the Modern Prometheus*).

Some more contemporary examples:

Chico Macmurtrie, Machine and Robotic Performance Artist:





Stelarc: Performance artist whose work focuses on extending the capabilities of the human body.

Chico Macmurtrie, Amorphic Robot Works:  
<http://amorphicrobotworks.org/works/index.htm>

Stelarc Online: <http://www.stelarc.va.com.au/>

POSTED BY JOHN HUDSON AT 01:46 

LABELS: [CYBERNETICS](#), [CYBERTHEORY](#), [DIGITAL CULTURE](#), [HORROR](#), [SCIENCE FICTION](#)